

Micah Chapters 6-7 – John Karmelich

1. In this lesson, we finish the book of Micah. This book breaks well into three sections. The first two chapters focused on God's judgment. Chapters 3-5 were about God's eternal plans for Israel. The last two chapters (these) are the "now what" chapters. In other words, once we realize Jesus died for our sins and here is His eternal plans for mankind given in a "nutshell" (the last few chapters), a logical follow up question is, now that we know all of that, what should we be doing until Jesus Second Coming? As always, glad you asked. The "now what" question, is essentially why I write these lessons. The easy answer is Christians are called to make a difference for Jesus in the world until He returns. On the surface, this text is about what God expects of us, and what the Israelites were doing wrong, and a closing prayer about what God will do someday. The important thing is these final chapters are an underlying message of what we should be doing until then.
2. Now that I got that speech out of my system, welcome to my study on the last two chapters in the book of Micah. He was an Old Testament prophet who lived about 750 BC. God called him to go preach to the Southern Israel Kingdom. For my newcomers, Israel was split into two kingdoms at that point in history. These last two chapters essentially say, "Hey all you Israelites (and those of us who believe Jesus is God), I've already stated pretty clearly what it is I expect of those who are called to be My disciples, so why are you just "sitting there"? These chapters lay out God's case of why the Israelites were ignoring how He expects them to live and the consequences for doing so. The book ends with a prayer mainly to thank God for "His program" with a not so subtle request for the Israelites to "get at it" as that's why God made them (and us) in the first place!
3. OK then, so what do you call this lesson? "The now what: The bad news and the good news". The last two chapters say in effect, here's what I (God) have asked all of you (i.e., His people) to do. I have separated you from the world. I introduced you to a life of trusting Me to guide your life to give you a joyful life. You've ignored Me and now you're going to suffer the consequences. That is the bad news. The good news is despite that fact, I'm still going to go through with my plan to rule the world from Israel, so despite the fact you've blown it badly, your people are going to win in the end because I say so. Anyway, there are the facts of the way the world works, deal with it.
4. As to the specifics of these two chapters, God explains how He has blessed them to date. Then we see Micah explaining what not to do, as in "Here's how other nations honor their false gods, but I am not like them, so here's what I expect, which involves honor and mercy. Then Micah lays out the sins of Israel at that moment as in, "You're blowing it big time". Then Micah explains how it's God who'll win in the end. The book ends with a prayer of gratitude to wrap up the book. What is underlying this lesson is how God expects us to act given His "game plan" for human history.
5. That's these two chapters in one paragraph. Much of the text reads like an attorney presenting his case. I sort of see Micah laying out God's arguments of "Why are you disobeying me anyway?" It is as if God's saying, "Here's how I expect you to live, here's how you're actually living". You will suffer for that mistake until I return to execute my plan to have the Messiah rule from Israel. The message to you and me is essentially the same: God expect us to use our life as a witness for Him. Failure to do so is a wasted life. The issue isn't salvation, but the question of what have we done with our salvation? That's why Israel's head was on the "chopping block" at that point in history. More importantly, it's a warning to us to not waste the valuable thing God's given us, our time or we too can and will suffer the same fate as them! In other words, this is a "Don't mess with God" lecture in these chapters. We're to live to make a difference for Him, as that is why we're created in the first place. That's Micah's message in a few thoughts.
6. I'm going to cover over twice the number of verses I did in the last lesson, mainly because both of these chapters go together to form Micah's closing arguments. Bottom line, I'm shorting my intro to a page, as there are a lot of verses to cover this week. As always, I'm encourage you to read the rest of this study. Not to learn the fate of the Israelites who lived millenniums ago, but to realize what God expects of us as His living witnesses for Him to the world around us. Let's begin:

7. Chapter 6, Verse 1: Listen to what the LORD says: "Stand up, plead your case before the mountains; let the hills hear what you have to say. ² Hear, O mountains, the LORD's accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel.
- Chapter 6 opens up like a courtroom drama. As I said, the last two chapters form the final section of this book. Think of Micah as the prosecuting attorney arguing for God. Then the jury is the "mountains and the hills". The Israelites are the one's on trial in this section.
 - I admit, it's strange to think of hills and mountains as the jury. Obviously, it isn't literal in the sense that mountains understand what Micah is saying. The idea is that the Israel land has in effect "watched" all of what Micah's about to describe as being true. It's like Micah's telling the land of Israel, that you know the history of the Israelites coming here. Still, I'm going to "recount the facts" to build the case why the Israelites should be obeying God in the first place! It's like telling the accused, "You should know all of this, but let me refresh your memory to explain your history from God's perspective".
 - One of the reasons God gave us the bible to study is to learn from the examples that occur throughout history. It's as if God's saying to us, don't repeat these mistakes or you will be suffering the same consequences as the people in this story. In other words, God wants us to pay attention to the story of Israel's history, not to learn ancient history, but as to avoid repeating the mistakes the Israelites have made. If we believe Jesus died for every sin we ever committed or ever will commit, God expects as much loyalty from us then He did of those Israelites who lived all those millenniums ago. Bottom line, "Pay attention, this will affect you and me as much as it affects them!"
 - OK then, now that we realize we've got a courtroom drama here and who the players are, it's time to lay out the accusations beginning of Verse 3.
8. Verse 3: "My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me.
- Time for one of my very loose translations: "How have I made you so miserable that all of you choose to ignore Me?" This is God saying to us, "Hey, I've provided a place for you to live and grow. I've provided air to breath and a planet that provides fresh water so you'll be able to sustain yourself. I've made it possible for people to be self-sufficient and all I'm asking in return is to acknowledge that I've created you and that you honor Me for doing all of that. Is that too much to ask? It's not like I'm asking for human sacrifice or to starve as I require that everything you earn be given to the nearest priest. The point here is those Israelites were enjoying their "success" and ignoring the God who created them or they're going through the "motions" of honoring God, but not putting their hearts into it! That in effect is the summary charge of the words, "Answer me" in this verse.
 - Realize Micah is just getting warmed up here. This will continue for a few more verses.
9. Verse 4: I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam.
- Loose translation #2: When you Israelites left Egypt, I provided leadership for you. Moses was your "civil" leader. Aaron was your spiritual leader (first High Priest). The first time we read of the Israelites praising God was when a woman named Miriam lead in singing praises to God for getting them through the Red Sea and out of Egypt.
 - The point being that God not only provided a place for us to live, He also provided us our leadership, both in terms of government leader and spiritual leaders. Yes, those roles will overlap at times, but for the most part God has separated the roles of civil leadership from spiritual leadership. Realize that when Micah wrote this, it is now roughly a millennium later, and the Israelites still have in place, a form of government with a king, a high priest as well as people to lead efforts to praises God for what He's done for us.
 - The bible loves to emphasize the fact the Israelites were brought out of slavery. The point for you and me is in effect we too were "slaves to sin" and it's only by what God's done for us that we can even live the type of life God's called us to live here.

- d) I'm well aware I'm preaching to the choir again. However, it's necessary to get the basics out of the way before we get into the specific sin charges coming up in a few verses. What we need to realize from these verses is just as the God separated the Israelites into living a life of trusting God for all aspects of their lives, so God has also separated you and me, so we too can honor Him as God. We too have a civil government, religious leaders, and even a worship leader. For those of you not involved in a church, realize that it was God Himself who set up this system, so we can glorify Him with our lives, while having a set of leaders who will lead us to glorify Him through these roles. Yes, that is the basics, but we need to establish that before moving on to the next step.
 - e) Speaking of the next step (ok, more accusations):
10. Verse 5: My people, remember what Balak king of Moab counseled and what Balaam son of Beor answered. Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD."
- a) I'm reminded of the old rule of life that says, those who don't study history will repeat its mistakes. The reason Micah is reciting ancient Jewish history is to tell the Israelite and us, "Learn from history, or else, you'll repeat the same mistakes and suffer the consequences that your ancestors did!"
 - b) Speaking of history, time for a refresher course here. Numbers Chapters 22-24, give us a strange story of a neighboring king to Israel who wanted to curse the Israelites. He hired a foreign priest to perform that curse. Whenever I read that story, it is easy to get Balaam and Balak mixed up. The way to remember who is who, is the word Balak in English has a "k" on the end. He's the king. The word Balaam has an "m" on the end. He wanted the money for cursing the Israelites. All I'm saying is think "k" for king and "m" for money. It will help keep the characters straight. OK, then, back to the story:
 - i) Balaam knew he could only preach what his "power source" told him to preach.
 - ii) Balaam was a foreigner who God gave the power to bless and curse.
 - iii) Balaam gives us several speeches of how God will bless Israel because that is what his "power source" (i.e., God) told him to say. Still, Balaam wanted to earn money. After all the blessings, Balaam said, go after their "weak spot". Send your prettiest girls to entice them to worship a foreign god and it'll cause God to punish them for disloyalty. That is a summary of those three chapters in Numbers. Yes, they made it to Israel, but not at a significant cost for that disobedience.
 - iv) The point for you and me is to realize our own weakness, and pray for God to help us through it. Another classic saying is, "Don't lead me into temptation, I can find it all by myself". The point is the only way we can overcome temptation is by God Himself providing us the power to do so. That alone is a good reason to stick close to God and trust daily in His guidance and protection.
 - c) Anyway once we get the reminder of what Balak and Balaam were all about, next we get listed two cities from ancient history. The short version is the first one (Shittim) is where the Israelites camped just outside of Israel where Balaam was defeated. The second city is the last place the Israelites conquered (Gilgal) in the book of Joshua. It's as if one says God was with us from "Point A to Point Z", so why do you doubt He's still guiding us now?
 - d) The reason we get this "history lesson" is the best way to realize God's working in our life is to study history and see where He's obviously worked. To be honest, we all experience moments of doubts about God's existence. During such times, recall a time where we do recall God working in our lives either on a personal level or on a grand scale. That's help us to realize if God is eternal and He helped "then", He's still there and He still desires to guide our lives for His glory. That's why we get this history recital here. Anyway, that is what Micah is doing here. He is saying, you all know how God's helped us in the past, so why are you turning from Him now? He'll still guide our lives if we let Him!

11. Verse 6: With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
- a) Verses 6 and 7 are almost "satirical" in their style. It's as if Micah is asking the jury, what'll it take to please God? Do we offer thousands of animals in order to please Him? Must we pour out rivers of oil before Him? These verses are not condemning the sacrificial system laid out in the earliest books of the bible. The issue isn't the sacrifices, but our heart while such sacrifices are made.
 - b) Let me modernize this: Does God want us to give at church in order to prove to Him how much we love Him? In other words, do we have to "earn His love"? Of course not. We're called to give to "put our money where our mouth is". When we put the needs of our kids or our spouse ahead of our own needs, we're putting our money where our mouth is. The same principal applies to God. There is not a list of "x" number of things we have to do in order to prove that God loves us. No amount of sacrifices or whatever can do that. We've got to accept the idea that God loves us, simply because He does. We simply must accept it as fact and deal with it accordingly. Realize that the pagan gods that existed at that time did require sacrifices of animals and in some cases one's own children to show our loyalty to that false deity. God says, "I don't need any of that. I'm God and I don't need sacrifices in order to live or in order to prove one's loyalty to Me." God did request sacrifices so we can "put our money where our mouth is".
 - i) Before I explain what God does demand of us, as stated in the next verse, I should quickly comment on why we Christians don't offer animal sacrifices as done in the book of Leviticus. The short version is because Jesus fulfilled all of those sacrifices in what He did on the cross. In effect, all of them point to what Jesus did. Since the Christian church started, animal and other sacrifices were done away with as we'll (the church) argue that Jesus completed the ritual by offering Himself for our sins.
 - ii) In Judaism, since the Temple was destroyed in 70AD, they too stopped the animal sacrifices and replaced it with "good works". A day will come after Jesus "sets up shop" where animal sacrifices return to remember what Jesus did. That's stated in the last few chapters of the book of Ezekiel.
 - c) OK enough on what we shouldn't be doing. Let us discuss what we should be doing!
12. Verse 8: He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.
- a) It's memorization time. Many scholars consider this one of the greatest verses in the bible. Realize the issue isn't salvation, but what we should be doing with that salvation! By now you realize that my favorite expression is "now what"? (As in I believe Jesus is God and I believe He died for every sin I've ever committed or will commit, so now what?) A pretty good summary of "now what" is here in Verse 8. Obviously there's a lot more to it than in this verse, or else we wouldn't have a whole bible to study, but again, this verse is a pretty good summary of what God expects of us. With that lofty introduction stated, let's look a little closer at what God requires of us? The key is the second sentence and three things:
 - i) The first is to "act justly". As we realize by now, God is not just a God of love, He's also a God of justice. That's why we're all judged one day by Him. One of the keys of living as God desires is to desire what He wants and do what He wills. One of the key points is that, just as we expect God to be fair to us in His dealings with us, so He expects us to be fair in our dealing with others. This is an underlying point of the whole "Sermon on the Mount" lecture: That we trust in God to guide every aspect of our lives, especially as we interact with other people. It is the idea of us doing to others what we'd want them to do to us. It's not how others actually treat us, but how we want them to treat us. That's often called "The Golden Rule".

- ii) Obviously, there are lots of ways to apply "act justly". The essential idea is to treat others as you'd like others to treat you. Justice includes the idea of realizing when we do make mistakes, we admit it, confess it and move on. Nobody expects us to be perfect just as we don't expect others to be perfect. One of my daily prayers is to realize that just as God has forgiven me of all my sins, so I should have the same attitude about others who have sinned against me. It's amazing how well we treat others, when we see them as needing God and not someone who's hurt us. It helps us get through the day better when we learn to think that way.
 - iii) The second one is to "love mercy". It doesn't mean that everyone who is definitely guilty of crimes be let out on the street to hurt more people. It is the idea that if we have a choice between showing kindness to others or treating others mean, we will chose mercy. Think about being a witness for God: Doesn't He forgive us for all of our sins because of our trust in what He did? Then shouldn't we also show mercy to others who harm us? It brings us back to the "Golden Rule" of treating others as we want to be treated, not as they actually act. I admit this is hard at times. When people say something mean to us, we want to strike back. Of course, times come to defend ourselves or war is a part of life. I'm not talking about that. This is about a situation where we have a choice between acting how "everyone else" acts or to do what God wants us to do, be a good witness for Him by showing kindness even if the person we're dealing with is not kind to us. That's showing mercy.
 - iv) The final one is "walk humbly with your God". It is the reminder that "He is God and we're not. It is the reminder that He in charge of our lives and we are not. It's the reminder that we go through life praying for His guidance and then make the best decisions we can assuming He is guiding our lives. That's what humility is in God's kingdom of believers.
- b) In summary, Micah's main point in this whole book is that if we can remember these three things of acting justly, loving mercy and walking humbly before God, odds are good we'll be kind to others, be a good witness for Him. Let's face it, we're a lot less likely to sin if we care about pleasing God at any moment. The rest is the details. Speaking of which, let us get back to Micah as we still have one and one-half chapters to finish.
- i) To summarize the last half dozen verses in one thought, we don't need to perform a few or many sacrifices to earn God's love. What He wants from us is to do what is right, which includes justice, kindness and humility before God. If we're willing to do that, then we are living as God requires. The rest is the details. Speaking of which, let's look at Verse 9:
13. Verse 9: Listen! The LORD is calling to the city-- and to fear your name is wisdom-- "Heed the rod and the One who appointed it.
- a) First question, what's the "city" in focus here? The logical answer would be Jerusalem. It's the capital of the Southern Israel Kingdom where Micah is preaching at that moment. It is where Jesus will rule the world from one day. I have to admit, I'm fascinated that we are called to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6). The reason we are, is that God has picked this city to rule the world from. When Jesus came 2,000 years ago, He never ruled from there or anywhere for that matter. In order for verses like this to come true, He must return to rule the world from somewhere, as He is fully God and fully man and that place where He will rule over the world from, is Jerusalem.
 - b) In other words, Micah is using a colorful way of saying, "Get your focus on God." By him mentioning "the city" it's just a colorful way of saying get your focus on God as that city is associated with the worship of Him for thousands of years.
 - c) Next question: What does "heed the rod" mean? It means that God can and does punish us when we ignore Him. As I like to say, the issue isn't salvation (although that can be in view here), but it's mainly about being a good witness for God with our lives.

- d) The final line of Verse 9 says, "The One who appointed it". That's a colorful way to remind us that God's the one who's "behind" the suffering. Let me use a historical example: When the Israelites were removed from the land by the Babylonians and again centuries later by the Romans, did God Himself physically appear to kick them out? Of course not. What it simply means is God can be behind the scene allowing those horrid things to occur.
- i) So does that mean God's behind all disasters? I can't speak for Him. I'm just sure He often allows horrid things to occur ultimately for His glory. As to the why, we just have to ask Him ourselves one day. In the meantime, it's time to get to specific sins the Israelites committed at that time.
14. Verse 10: Am I still to forget, O wicked house, your ill-gotten treasures and the short ephah, which is accursed? ¹¹ Shall I acquit a man with dishonest scales, with a bag of false weights?
- a) In the early verses of this lesson, Micah acted like a spokesman for God effectively saying "How did I let you down or what did I do wrong?" Here, beginning in Verse 10 and going to Verse 12, Micah switches gears as if to say, I'm well aware of what you have collectively done to be a lousy witness for God. Let me list a few of those things while I'm at it!
- b) Before I get into the specifics, realize this is not a "naughty list, and that's all there is!" It is more of a list of specific examples of how the Israelites have not shown mercy, not shown any justice and not walked humbly before God. Now that I've gotten my disclaimers out of my system, let's look at the specific charges.
- c) The first is "ill-gotten treasures". Yes you can call it stealing. God's saying many have got rich by cheating others. I can get into the specifics, but you get the idea. The phrase "short ephah" is simply another way of saying one has cheated others. It is a measure of grain. It is saying, "you've built dishonest scales in order to get rich". Speaking of dishonest scales, that is what is blatantly stated in Verse 11.
- d) One of the things that's mentioned a lot in the bible is references to dishonest scales. It is a simple example of doing "what is just" and an easy one to point out.
- e) Again, it's not the specific "naughty list" that's the issue, but examples of how those called to be His people were not like acting like it. OK two more verses on this topic:
15. Verse 12: Her rich men are violent; her people are liars and their tongues speak deceitfully.
- a) OK enough of the "dishonest in business". Here we get references to violence, and lying. I suspect cheating and stealing were common enough back then, that His judgment needed to come down. Remember that's a lot of "grand scale" punishments with harsh judgment coming as a "last resort". It's as if God's saying, "I want all of you to be a witness for Me. I don't know what it takes to convince you otherwise. If removal from the land, destruction and death is what it takes, I'll (God) resort to that if nothing else is going to work."
16. Verse 13: Therefore, I have begun to destroy you, to ruin you because of your sins.
- a) Speaking of "If that's what it takes", we see it described here. The destruction of the North Kingdom probably occurred shortly (within a decade or two at the latest) from when this prediction was made. The Southern Israel Kingdom's destruction didn't come for around another 100 years after Micah wrote this. Still, bottom line, it is suffering time!
- b) OK John, this sounds horrible, how do we avoid this? The main thing to realize is there is punishment for not living as God desires. Yes I'm preaching to us saved Christians. We'll suffer in this lifetime if we fail to use our lives as a witness for God. Does that mean all is going to suffer? Of course not. Many will simply receive a lack of a reward in heaven for not using our lives to make a difference for Him. Now that I've scared us all half to death I can get back to the Israelites as an example of what they had to endure of God's wrath!
17. Verse 14: You will eat but not be satisfied; your stomach will still be empty. You will store up but save nothing, because what you save I will give to the sword. ¹⁵ You will plant but not harvest; you will press olives but not use the oil on yourselves, you will crush grapes but not drink the wine.
- a) The short version here is there's a lot of suffering to occur when we turn from God!

- b) The longer version is the Israelites will feel the pains of starvation. Many will be killed by a sword. What they planted they had to give to foreigners. Let's face it, when an invading army attacks, they also take what grows in the farm lands of where they attack.
 - c) Yes, this is a horrible reminder of ancient history of armies destroying other places. Yes it is a reminder of how most Israelites suffered simply because they turned to worship gods other than the true and living God. I could give you the graphic details, but let's just say it is really bad news and leave it at that.
 - d) What does all this mean for you and me? Is God going to strike down our country if the Christians start ignoring Him? Will we suffer individually if we fail to seek Him? I won't put anything past Him. The important thing to realize is that God gives us time and He's expecting us to use some of it for His glory. What about "doing the laundry and making a living?" Of course. Over and above being a good witness in doing what we have to do all of our lives, there is also cases of using the talents God's given us for His glory. It does not have to be "anything fancy". Simply helping in church or helping around the house are a few examples of how we can be using our time to make a difference for Him.
 - e) Meanwhile, Micah's still laying it on thick on the Israelites. One more verse of before he'll let up.
18. Verse 16: You have observed the statutes of Omri and all the practices of Ahab's house, and you have followed their traditions. Therefore I will give you over to ruin and your people to derision; you will bear the scorn of the nations. "
- a) Omri and Ahab were two kings of the Northern Kingdom. Omri is the one who built the city of Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom. It's an example of the Israelites who didn't want to seek Jerusalem as "God's home". Remember the fact that "we can't worship God any old way we feel like it". He expects obedience to "His rules". Listing Omri as the king who built the capital city away from Jerusalem is an example of that.
 - b) While nothing good is written about all the Northern Kings, Ahab stands out as probably the worst of them. He introduced "Baal" worship (a false god) as a prominent alternative to the worship of the true God. He did a lot more than that, but that practice is associated with that king. Bottom line, Micah lists two historically bad kings as if to say to all those who seek God: 1) Don't turn from Him and 2) Worship Him as He requires we do! If we do that, we're on the right path.
 - c) Let me summarize the second sentence in three words: It's too late! Micah's point is Israel has gotten so bad (especially the Northern Kingdom at that point), escape from what He's going to do is too late as it's a done deal.
 - i) The longer version is God's going to turn them over to nonbelievers to let them do what they want to His people. Again, I can get into a lot of details on just how the Israelites suffered over the millenniums. The point to learn here is that God is not to be messed with! That alone is one of the main points of the lesson let alone the whole bible.
 - d) That leads to the big question: When is it too late? Ok, besides death. I've given up a long time ago trying to figure out who's saved and who isn't. I figure heaven is God's domain so He and He alone gets to decide who can be with Him for eternity and what rewards or punishment people get there based on obedience. However, all of us know people who've turned away from God. I'm equally as convinced it's almost impossible for such people to turn their lives toward Him. Since we do not know who is and who isn't saved, all we can do is pray for people's hearts to change and try to be a good witness to them when we are around them. By the way, being a good witness doesn't mean beating people on the head with a bible. Often just having a humble attitude and seeking to do the right thing is the way people can tell we're different. Yes we can preach the gospel if the situation arises. I have found often just "hitting a single" is better than trying to hit a home run every time!
 - e) OK then, enough lecturing. Let's move on to Chapter 7, the final one in the book.

19. Chapter 7, Verse 1: What misery is mine! I am like one who gathers summer fruit at the gleaning of the vineyard; there is no cluster of grapes to eat, none of the early figs that I crave.
- a) In Chapter 7, Micah continues to be the "prosecuting attorney" on God's behalf essentially saying, "Here's what My people are doing wrong". In Verse 1 of Chapter 7, to me it reads as if Micah is now turning to the jury and saying, "It's hard to describe how all the pain I have suffered because of the Israelites. It is as if I was hungry, and went to get some food and nothing was there. (Keep in mind that the climate in Israel is great for growing both grapes and figs, which is why those two types of fruit are mentioned here.)"
 - b) This leads to a natural question: Can God be grieved? Can the god who created all things suffer grief? If we believe God knows all things and writes history in advance, how can it be possible for that same God to grieve? What I'm convinced of is that He loves people so much it does grieve God when we don't act like we should. It's the idea that He has given us free will and it "pains Him" that we chose by that free will to ignore Him. At the same time, I accept the idea He knows all things, but it still hurts God that we ignore Him.
 - i) OK John, how do you know that God knows all things? For starters, He tells us of events of history centuries or millenniums before it occur. If you accept the fact of the Old Testament being written long before the New Testament was written, it is amazing to consider the hundreds or thousands of predictions that were made and occurred exactly as God said they would. In the last lesson, I discussed some of the details about the birth of Jesus and the "trouble" God went through so that Jesus is born exactly that way as predicted seven centuries before it occurred. The fact that the Israelites still exist as a people and the country exists again today is also proof of His existence and the fact He tells us of history long before it occurs.
 - c) I know I'm preaching to the choir again, but I want all of us to grasp the idea that the God is perfect, yet He can grieve how His people turn from Him at the same time. That's what this verse alone is teaching us.
20. Verse 2: The godly have been swept from the land; not one upright man remains. All men lie in wait to shed blood; each hunts his brother with a net.
- a) Speaking of making predictions that literally came true, Verse 2 is an example of it. Micah is telling us roughly a hundred years before it occurred, that the land of Israel essentially will be swept clean of Israelites. One of my favorite facts to point out is in world history, there has never been a nation that was removed from their homeland, scattered and came back together to form a nation again. There has never been a dead language that returned to daily use. The exception in both cases is Israel. That alone is proof of God's existence.
 - b) I remind us of those facts as Verse 2 is literally predicting just that: Israelites will be taken out of that land and it will be swept clean of those people.
 - c) OK "Mr. History buff", we know you know all of that, why mention it here? Remember in the last part of Chapter 6, Micah listed ways the Israelites were guilty of collective sin? As we get into the early part of Chapter 7, Micah is now saying, "Yes they are guilty and here is the punishment for those sins". Micah is describing long before it occurred of the killing of people in the land of Israel. But doesn't this verse imply Israelites killing each other? I would say yes and I suspect as war was going on in that land, that existed as well as there would be factions for and against this action. To make a sad and long story short, this was a horrid time of war and killing of innocent people was common.
 - d) The question of course, is why should we care about all this ancient history? It is not as if we have to fear God kicking Christians out of our homeland as we're scattered all over the world. That's true. However, just as God held the Israelites to a higher standard than He does to nonbelievers, so He holds us accountable to a higher standard. As I like to remind us, the problem with knowing our bible is God now holds us accountable for what we do know about Him. Think about it logically: If we accept that Jesus is God and died for all of our sins, what are we doing about it? That's how God holds us accountable!

- e) To continue that point, if God can "grieve" the Israelites not living as He desires, why do we think He'd be any easier on us? But don't we Christians live under His grace? I'm not denying that in any way, shape or form. I'm saying that just as He held the Israelites to a higher standard than nonbelievers back then, so He holds us to a higher standard than all of those who don't believe the Gospel today. As the old Christian expression goes, do you believe Jesus died for all of your sins? Great, what have you done about it? Therefore, He can grieve when we turn from Him and find ways to punish us just as God grieved when the Israelites turn from Him. In other words, we're wasting our lives if we believe Jesus is God and then ignore that fact the rest of our lives. There, now that I've scared everyone, I can get back to Micah. :)
21. Verse 3: Both hands are skilled in doing evil; the ruler demands gifts, the judge accepts bribes, the powerful dictate what they desire-- they all conspire together.
- a) Since Micah has been on a role as "prosecuting attorney" on God's behalf, Micah continues to lay it on thick and explain exactly what it is that Israel "collectively" is doing that's sin.
- b) In these verses, we get references to the fact the Israelites "learned" how to do evil. If you think about it logically, babies can't do evil. People have to learn those skills. That's what is in view to start verse 3. The specific's of the evil is the rest of the verse. It states the fact that the Israel leaders demand gifts (as in "pay to play" where leaders will say if you want "this" done, you must pay me to accomplish it, right or wrong). That is also why we read here of judges accepting bribes and the powerful dictating what they desire.
- c) As most of us know, there is nothing new about "pay to play". It's gone by different names over time, but the crime is essentially the same, of leaders taking advantage of their power and using it to get even richer or more powerful.
- d) I can just hear many of you saying, "Well, what can we do about that? We're not in power to change any of that!" We easily forget that "prayer is the heavy artillery of God". If we're living in a world with corrupt leadership, then we pray for God to do something. We get the boldness to stand up and say "that is wrong". One of the hardest things to do in life is "boldness", where we actually take a stand to say something is wrong. Think of Micah, he was a "nobody from nowhere" who had the courage to say to the leaders of Israel, "here is what you're doing wrong and God's well aware of it". I don't know how Micah's life came to an end, but I'm guessing is it wasn't pretty as he stood up for God's truth while a lot of corruption went on around him. There's an old expression that "Pioneers get the arrows" meaning those who take the step to try something new, get fired on! My point is simply that boldness for God and taking a stand for what is right, can be hard at times. It is also what God calls us to do, have the boldness to be a witness for Him!
- e) OK, once again I'm scaring away my readers from wanting to continue, so I'll stop that!
22. Verse 4: The best of them is like a brier, the most upright worse than a thorn hedge. The day of your watchmen has come, the day God visits you. Now is the time of their confusion.
- a) I've been cutting off Micah as he's been on a role. To paraphrase this verse, "Even the best of the Israelites have been like a "pin prick" in that they hurt others and hurt (grieve) God by their actions. Now suffering time is coming, as they are beyond hope". One thing that all of us must grasp is that God can say to a society of believers is that you're now beyond hope! Micah is announcing the coming judgment (via the Assyrian invasion to the North Israel kingdom and later the Babylonian invasion to the South Kingdom) as if to announce to them that is it's now too late. As a society, they're now collectively beyond hope.
- b) Ever had a moment where you see some corruption and you think, "Hey God, why aren't You doing something about this?" What we forget is God is well aware of that corruption and often He is working to do something about it on His timing. What we also can forget is while all that corruption is occurring there are also people being saved there, so He will allow it only as a witness against them and the fact of that corruption makes some realize what they need to do to avoid that same fate.

- c) My point here is simply that "destruction comes" only when it is truly beyond hope. God has allowed civilizations to be destroyed out of corruption. It comes at a point where the situation is beyond hope. Now comes the kicker: How does God balance His promise to give Israel that land with disobedience? We can also ask how does He balance the fact He promises us eternal life simply by believing Jesus died for all our sins, with the fact we too ignore what He desires of our lives? What I'm getting at is God can and does punish us as a society when we sin, but we can still benefit from His promises of eternal life. Still at the same time, we can suffer when we fail to live, as He desires. If you get all of that, you get the Christian life! Meanwhile, I left the Israelites in big trouble!
 - d) The verse describes life as a time of confusion. The Israelites were very aware of that God did bring them to that land. Therefore, as they faced conquering armies, they must have been asking, "why would God allow us to be kicked out of here?" They too had to wrestle with unconditional promises versus obedience as we Christians must also wrestle with it.
23. Verse 5: Do not trust a neighbor; put no confidence in a friend. Even with her who lies in your embrace be careful of your words. ⁶ For a son dishonors his father, a daughter rises up against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law-- a man's enemies are the members of his own household.
- a) Here's Micah's final verses describing the horrors of Israel's destruction. You have to read this in context: Micah is describing the destruction of Israel. It got so bad, it got to a point where nobody trusted anybody. No one knew who was on who's side. Destruction came to that land as everyone lived in fear.
 - b) If you ask me what is the opposite of faith, I'd say fear. Fear is what causes us to get hope off of God and onto our problems or what could happen in our future. In battles, armies (and in sports), people will try to encourage fear on the other side as contests are easier to win if the other side fears losing. Micah is describing a time when fear took over a society and no one trusts anyone due to that fear.
 - c) In Matthew 10:35, Jesus quotes Verse 6, although He doesn't mention Micah by name. In Matthew, Jesus point was simply that because He came in the world, people will divide as to their opinion about Him. Belief in Jesus will split families. Not that Jesus is anti-family in any way. It's just that belief in Him will cause that split. Picture a family that does not believe that Jesus is God. Then a grown child accepts Jesus and wants to be a missionary for Jesus. One can see how that situation would cause a split in the family, and that's just one example of how Jesus interpretation of this verse came literally true.
 - d) The connection between Jesus use of this verse and Micah is in both cases, it refers to fear. It refers to fear of what God can and is doing, and not trusting anyone due to that fear. In the case of Jesus using it, the fear is of a family member turning to Jesus and how that will affect the rest of the family. In Micah's case, the fear is of destruction and how that'll affect the rest of their lives.
 - e) OK then John, what do we do when we're afraid? What if it's legitimate? The issue is still do we trust God through that fear? Whatever we have to face in this lifetime, will at worst last one lifetime. God didn't come to earth to make us rich and carefree. He came to earth to pay the price for our sins and teach us to use our lives for His glory. That can bring joy to our lives even in the most stressful of times! Speaking of hope, look at Verse 7:
24. Verse 7: But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me.
- a) By this point, I think Micah's tired about complaining about what's going to happen to his fellow Israelites. It's as if he's thinking, "I'm tired of stating all this bad news, let me end it by remind us of the long term good news." It's like saying, "I know things are bad now as there is corruption beyond hope. I know things are going to get worse as God is bringing down the hammer and hard on us now. Still, I will hope in God not because of the pain I will have to suffer, but because I know we'll win in the end!"

- b) In other words, the same type of hope and joy that I described we can have when we do focus on God's ultimate plan for the saved, can give us joy through the worst of times. It is also what Micah is focusing on here. From this point to the end of the book, Micah will in effect offer up a prayer of gratitude. It's like saying, "Despite the pain and suffering we will go through, we honor You as God as we know You'll bless us for eternity because we trust in what You have done for us and not based on our works". That is God's grace.
25. Verse 8: Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise. Though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light.
- a) To praise God for what He's going to do, does not mean we have to deny our present pain as not being real. Just as Israel as a nation has fallen over and over again, despite all of the effort to wipe them out as a people, God will rescue those who trusted in Him not because of their works, but simply based on their faith in Him. Of course I believe we must believe Jesus died for every sin we ever commit to get into heaven. I'm just saying in a time before that event, salvation was about trusting in what God "will do" for Jewish salvation. For us we must also believe it's about what Jesus will do to resurrect us to eternal life. That's why we read here of Micah describing God as "His light" for eternity.
- b) Remember that all of this was painful for Micah. He was well aware of the fact most of the people around him turned from God. He was well aware to preach all of this can cost him his life. He was well aware he was a "nobody" called to preach to the powerful. Despite it all, Micah not only did what God called him to do, but He trusted that God will keep His word about eternal life. Whether you realize it or not, that's a pretty good summary of the Christian life in one thought. OK, then, back to Micah's closing prayer:
26. Verse 9: Because I have sinned against him, I will bear the LORD's wrath, until he pleads my case and establishes my right. He will bring me out into the light; I will see his righteousness.
- a) Realize that Micah never thought of himself as perfect. He did not think he's a better man than other Israelites because God spoke to him. Micah believed that God will forgive him of his sins and that he'll be resurrected because of his trust in God keeping His word.
- b) OK John, how do you know all of this is true? Why is 30% of the bible predictions, most of which have come true? Why does Israel still exist today? All I'm saying is the evidence is there of God's existence and His plan for mankind if we're just willing to exam it!
- c) Realize Micah is well aware of God's unconditional promises, so he's ending his book by praising God for what He will do in the future! Now if that isn't a great hint of what we should be doing in our day of trouble, I don't know what is!
27. Verse 10: Then my enemy will see it and will be covered with shame, she who said to me, "Where is the LORD your God?" My eyes will see her downfall; even now she will be trampled underfoot like mire in the streets.
- a) One can see Micah is getting on a role here, describing the inevitable future of God's rule of the world from here. Some scholars ponder if Micah's talking about a point in history that already occurred such as the return from Babylonian captivity or the modern rebirth of Israel. Personally, I don't see it that way. When in history, has any of Israel's enemies "ever been covered in shame" or see the downfall of every other major religion? All I am saying is I think Micah is getting all "end times" on us here.
- b) Notice the "My eyes will see her downfall". This is talking about the destruction of land of Israel's enemies. In the "same breadth" of the ultimate victory that God will have when He returns to rule the world from Israel. Micah mentions that he will see it's downfall! Let me put it this way: Micah didn't live long enough to see Israel's fall to Babylon. Yes he probably saw the North Kingdom fall. It can refer to Israel's return to that land. As much as it is possible to refer to some historical context, I'm still positive this "end time stuff".
- c) The reason we should care about all this stuff, isn't because we too can watch it in heaven "from the balcony", but to realize it's all part of God's plan for ultimate victory. When we think our life isn't going well, it's a reminder that we will have victory in the end!

28. Verse 11: The day for building your walls will come, the day for extending your boundaries.
- a) Keep in mind the focus here. It is as if Micah is taunting Israel's enemies and telling them that even though you (enemies) have think you've won and you'll extend your boundary into Israel, "it's not over until God says it's over". In that day, it'll be Israel who'll rebuild its walls and extend its boundaries.
 - b) Something you may find interesting is the size of the land of Israel will grow when Jesus returns to "set up shop" as I'm fond of saying. If you do some math and study the amount of land that the tribes of Israel will have in that day, let's just say most of Jordan and parts of Iraq and Iran will be part of Israel in that day. (It requires the study of Ezekiel Chapter 48 and some knowledge of a "cubit" and how much land a square cubit can entail.)
29. Verse 12: In that day people will come to you from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, even from Egypt to the Euphrates and from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain.
- a) Speaking of Israel's boundaries being expanded, I present Verse 12. Since Micah's praying over what God has promised to be Israel's ultimate victory, he is describing all the people who'll travel to Israel to see this. In Micah's time, the "big boys on the block" were Egypt and Assyria. The Euphrates is a river in Babylon. This is Micah's way of saying, "People will come from all over the place to see Israel in that day".
 - b) OK you may say, "Good for Israel, why should I care?" For starters, if we can trust God to keep His unconditional promises to us through Jesus, then we also need to trust what He promised to Israel. The second thing to realize is that when Jesus "sets up shop", I believe we will somehow be involved in the process. We won't be in heaven, watching all of this is saying, "Go Jesus, good for You". God's job for us in that day will be to enforce His rule all over the world. To quote a famous late pastor in my area, "I already claimed the island of Kawai for myself". Whatever we do in that day, I'm positive we won't just be in heaven bored watching all of this. In the meantime, eight verses to go.
30. Verse 13: The earth will become desolate because of its inhabitants, as the result of their deeds.
- a) Let's face it, when the big, bad "Revelation show" happens, there will be a lot of death. We get a clue of that here as Micah is describing the desolation of the world because of what's going to occur in that day. Remember that Israel's victory is the world's loss and here we have a sample of what that loss means to the world. Enough said on that point. Micah is desiring to focus on God's ultimate victory here, not the world's defeat in this prayer!
31. Verse 14: Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance, which lives by itself in a forest, in fertile pasturelands. Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead as in days long ago.
- a) Speaking of getting the focus on the return of the Messiah, we get the classic comparison of the Messiah being like a shepherd watching over his sheep. OK time for another tough question: How does the Messiah actual feed people in that day? I don't think manna will rain from heaven again. I think people will grow food. The role of the Messiah will be to provide spiritual nourishment (i.e., tell us Himself how we are to live), as well as protect His people as a shepherd protects His flock. Could I be wrong? Of course, however that is how I see it.
 - b) Oh, the references to Bashan and Gilead are places associated with Moses and Elijah (who lived in separate eras) but both worked to lead the Israelites close to God. It is two places that Israelites who know their history would associate with those two people.
32. Verse 15: "As in the days when you came out of Egypt, I will show them my wonders."
- a) One of the things stressed over and over again in the bible is the fact that God lead all the Israelites out of Egypt into Israel. That was God working on a "grand scale" and of course, the "Revelation show" will be a grand scale event as well. Let's put it this way, the book of Revelation mostly describes a grand scale war from God's perspective. After an event like that, there's no way people can say "God wasn't involved in that" as it'll end with Israel as the big winner with their land greatly expanded. The loser will be a world of people who don't want the God of the bible to rule over their lives. That's in effect how that war ends!

- b) Anyway, it's going to be a "big show" one day bigger on the scale than even the Israelites as they got out of Egypt. Now that we got that, four more verses to go.
33. Verse 16: Nations will see and be ashamed, deprived of all their power. They will lay their hands on their mouths and their ears will become deaf. ¹⁷ They will lick dust like a snake, like creatures that crawl on the ground. They will come trembling out of their dens; they will turn in fear to the LORD our God and will be afraid of you.
- a) OK enough of the "winner's perspective", time for the "loser's perspective". If you've ever watched the end of a sports contest, the cameras love to show the faces of the winners and the losers after a game. Well, it's like that on a grand scale, with no rematch ever to come.
- b) I've been lecturing all through this lesson about a "too late". Those who oppose God's rule and will live at this time, are going to be in "shell shock". They'll turn in fear of God who'll see rule over this world.
- c) Let me ask a quick but tough question: Why wait until the End Times for all this to occur? Why can't bad people go to hell and good go to heaven? Why the big show? To show the world that there's a limit on God's patience. Think about it this way: If heaven has a finite number of people, there has to be a last one and this is how God wraps it up in an obvious way so the whole world will know He's had enough!
34. Verse 18: Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.
- a) In case you forgot we're reading a prayer. A common mistake we Christians make is we tend to focus too much of our prayers on what we want God to do for us. We forget that prayer should also include what God is doing and will do in the future. It's not about an effort to encourage Him, but a reminder to ourselves of what He does and will do.
- b) That's what we read here in Verse 18. So why remind us that God's anger is not forever? Remember that most of Micah focuses on condemning the Israelites for their sins. Yet at the end of the book we get the reminder that His anger is not permanent. It's a reminder that He'll still show mercy to mankind and allow Israel to win in the end.
- c) A quick note on God's anger. I hold the view that God's perfectly angry at sin all the time just as He's perfectly forgiving all the time and perfectly just in His judgment. The reason we focus on His anger at times or His love at times is we see the results of those things so we think God must be "this" at this time. Anyway, that's the focus of this verse.
35. Verse 19: You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.
- a) Speaking of "telling us the future millenniums before it occurs" I present Verse 19. Stop to think about sin as a physical thing. Can one actually throw sins in the sea? Of course not, it is a metaphor of the idea that sin will no longer exist one day. Personally, I connect this verse with Revelation 21:1 where it says, "there will be no more sea". It means God throws our sins in the sea then throws away the sea" (metaphorically speaking). I can run with it from there, but you get the idea and I'm running long. OK then, time for the final verse:
36. Verse 20: You will be true to Jacob, and show mercy to Abraham, as you pledged on oath to our fathers in days long ago.
- a) Micah ends his book by reminding us that God will keep His promises to the descendants of Abraham and his grandson Jacob, which is a colorful way of telling us God will always keep His unconditional promise to Israel just as we can trust He'll keep His unconditional promise that we're saved by our trust in Jesus dying for our sins. I can't think of a happier way to end the book. With that said, time to wrap this up in a closing prayer.
37. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, while we don't know Your timing, we do know the world as we do know it will end as You've said. Help us to trust in You as You provide us with the joy and the courage to use our lives to make a difference for You. Help us to be bold as a witness for You as that is how You've called us to live. Guide our lives as we use them for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.